

"BALAKLAVA : A VISIT TO LORD RAGLAN'S FORMER HEADQUARTERS IN 1869"**By Dr. Douglas J. Austin 06 [TWC 24(1) p20 2006]**

Early in 1869, the Prince and Princess of Wales (Albert and Alexandra) paid a lengthy private visit to the Ottoman Empire, touching at Egypt (to visit the Suez Canal) and Turkey before continuing to Sevastopol, clearly at the Prince's wish. Further details of this Royal visit can be found in W. H. Russell's book "A Diary in the East during the Tour of the Prince and Princess of Wales", which was published in two editions by Routledge, London, 1869.

The Illustrated London News (ILN) of the period ran a number of articles^{1,2} on 'The Crimea Revisited', which included adverse comments on the state of the British cemeteries - in contrast to those of the French. A series of fine engravings^{3,4} were based on the works of their Special Artist, who was present and who had been in the Crimea in 1854-1855.

The following text appeared in the ILN issue for May 22, 1869 [p. 513]:
'The house and outhouses which were so long the head-quarters the British Army in the Crimea were the property of a family named Braker. They lived there, and hastily retired on the arrival of the Allied Armies, but the household departed in such a hurry that only a few of the most valuable articles in the place could be removed. When our army left the Crimea, Colonel Braker returned to his house, and found that the premises had not been improved by the occupancy which had just ceased. The house had not been held on a repairing lease. All the furniture was gone, and nothing but a few camp chairs were left. Colonel Braker and his wife have lived there since that time, and the place is now comfortably furnished in the Russian style. Any visitors to the Crimea are courteously made welcome to enter and see the room in which Lord Raglan died.'

'Before the army left a marble slab had been inserted in the wall with the following inscription :- "In this room died F.M. Lord RAGLAN, G.C.B., Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in the Crimea, on June 28 1855." Underneath this is another slab, with the same inscription translated into Russian. On the panel of the door leading into this room the following names are cut:- F. M. Lord RAGLAN. Gen. Sir J. SIMPSON. Gen. Sir W. CODRINGTON. "The only other name that is left is that of 'Capt. Ponsonby', which is cut on the outside of the door of the room occupied by him at the time; this, as well as Colonel Steele's room, is now a bed-room. Colonel Vico's room is also a well-furnished bed-room, and all the many cartoons which were done with charcoal on its walls are gone; but Mrs. Braker recollects them well, particularly the representation of the grand ball, which all the staff officers had attended in Constantinople, before the army came on to Varna and thence to the Crimea.'

'Externally the old head-quarters is less changed. The house itself has quite the old look about it, but the space in front is certainly in better order than it used to be. The small houses on each side in which the staff got their quarters are also very little changed; but, as I entered one or two of those with which I used to be familiar, I found the change in the inside was considerable. There seemed to be a family living in each building. There are two of the wooden huts which came out from England still remaining at head-quarters: one is at the group of houses where the Quartermaster-General's offices were; and the other belonged to the old quarters of Sir John Burgoyne. It may be worth knowing that these huts still look as if they were capable of giving shelter - which implies more durability than one could have expected of such comparatively frail erections. There is a Greek church in the Karabelnaiya, which has been formed entirely of the wood of our old huts. It is a very clear indication of the demolition produced by the bombardment to find that it was easier to construct a place of worship from the huts we had left than to repair one of the shattered houses in that quarter. This church is in very good order, and although, evidently, at first intended to be only temporary, it is still used for service, and is well fitted up with church furniture.'

‘The garden at head-quarters is also in better order than it was in 1855. The fruit-trees were white and pink with blossom at the time of my visit. Colonel Braker thinks of selling the house and ground, and its purchase by our own Government has been mooted, in connection with an attempt at doing something for the graves in the Crimea. It is feared that if the place gets into the hands of Tartars nothing will be respected, and that the few indications which are left of our occupation of the Crimea will be lost.’

‘The manner in which Colonel and Mrs. Braker respect the monuments, and every token of the foreigners' sojourn here which remains on their property, is such as to merit the gratefulness of everyone who feels an interest in what is now a historical spot. The cypress-trees and flowers in Lord Raglan's room, as seen in the Illustration, will tell of the more than ordinary care with which they treat what has been left. The portrait on the wall is another indication of this; it is a copy of the engraving from Richmond's fine portrait of General Estcourt, Lord Raglan's Quartermaster-General, who also died at head-quarters only a few days before his chief.’ ‘There is a stone in the garden with an inscription, which reads as follows:- ‘To the Memory of Field Marshal Lord RAGLAN, G.C.B., Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in the Crimea, died June 28, 1855.’ This inscription does not state the real purpose for which the stone was erected. It is known that Lord Raglan's body was embalmed before it was sent to England, and this marks the spot where his heart was buried.’



THE CRIMEA REVISITED: THE ROOM IN WHICH LORD RAGLAN DIED AT THE HEAD-QUARTERS' RESIDENCE, NEAR SEBASTOPOL.

Further details are given in John Sweetman's fine book *Raglan: From the Peninsula to the Crimea, Arms and Armour*, London, 1993 : (pp 335-336):

‘Before the troops left the Crimea, three other memorials were completed there. A marble tablet, approximately 14 inches square, was fixed to the wall of Raglan's bedroom... Russian troops took over the old farmhouse after the peace and these words were translated for a slightly larger slab,

fashioned by British Sappers, of stone quarried from in front of the 3rd Division's former position on the upland. On 3 July 1856, under orders from Leicester Curzon, Lieutenant Frederick Brine RE ensured that the Russian slab was fixed below that of the British and cemented to it. That day, too, a third memorial, also of quarried stone, was placed in the middle of the vineyard in front of the former British headquarters beneath a willow tree by the well. Brine chose the site, which overlooked the slope towards the ravine of the Monastery of St George, and Carson 'furnished' the inscription... There was a postscript. Brine and his men then completed three other 'great public monuments' for the Battles of Inkerman, Balaclava and the Redan, before marching down to Balaclava prior to embarkation on 9 July. Next day (10 July) Brine secured two volunteers to return to the farmhouse once more to blacken the letters on the outside slab. The Russians lent Privates Thompson and Dickson tallow candles and a lantern to complete the task, which they did by 11 p.m. As Brine explained to Lord Raglan's widow, this was 'the last thing executed by the British soldier on that blood-stained land'.

A report in "The Times" (for 29th April, 1869) read as follows:

'We next went to the British Headquarters, over the plateau, crossing the head of the ravine which separates the two. The house in which Lord Raglan died, and in which General Simpson and General Codrington in succession executed their functions as Commanders-in-Chief of the Army in the Crimea, has been done up and renovated, but even in the details it is very much as it was when they lived there. The outhouses, stables, and dependencies are intact, and we could make out where Estcourt and de Morel, where Chetwode and Macnaghten, of the 8th Hussars escort, where Fowle Smith and Cookesley, where Romaine and Pakenham, had their quarters, where Steele, Burghersh, Somerset, and Calthorpe 'hung out,' and the Post-office site, and Campbell's hut, and Dacre's quarters, and so on.'

'At the door stood the Russian officer in uniform, the owner of the place now as then, whose name, I think, is Buchof, and he led the Prince and Princess to the rooms, and presented his wife to them. Nothing could be more perfect and admirable than the cleanliness, neatness, and taste of the place. Flowers and shrubs perfumed the apartments, and by the slab which marks where 'Lord Raglan died' two cypress trees were placed, growing in tubs. We heard that it is likely the present proprietor may have to sell his little estate, and, if so, there is a good opportunity for the British Government to purchase it and make the garden and vineyard at the back the principal Cemetery. After a deeply interesting inspection, the Prince and Princess took leave of the proprietor and his wife, and the party drove over to the Monastery of St. George - a bleak and cold journey enough.'

John Sweetman (op. cit.; pp 238-239) also provides a valuable description of the headquarters complex, as follows: 'On 5 October Raglan had moved his headquarters from Balaclava on to the upland. He and his staff took over the abandoned farmhouse in which he would die at Khutor, north of the Col and east of the French headquarters, 1½ miles from Sevastopol and four miles north-west of Balaclava. Scavenging troops had been prevented from dismantling the roof just in time, and Raglan expressed his delight at 'a good house in the centre of the position, which is undoubtedly an immense advantage'. Adding that 'I hate a tent,' he remarked to Priscilla that he was the only one of the army not under canvas - a luxury enjoyed only until others laid claim to vacant rooms. The building comprised three small, connected wings surrounding a courtyard which was open on its fourth (northern) side. The whole structure ran roughly north-west/south-east, so that Raglan's spartan room in the southern wing looked towards the Monastery of St George and gained the benefit of evening sun. The British commander-in-chiefs washing and dressing-tables stood beneath the single window; his writing-table, where he dealt with dispatches and from which he conducted meetings and interviews, lay in the centre of the room opposite its only entrance via a dining area to the west. Immediately behind the table another opening to the east led into Airey's room but was blocked by clothes' racks. Raglan sat at the table with his back to the Quartermaster-

General's room, with the window on his left. His iron bed rested in the angle near the entrance door farthest from the window.'

'Each of the building's protruding wings had an exit to the north, the western one designated 'principal entrance'. Within the house, the narrow connecting passages were officially described as 'dark'. A pantry was found in the west wing, another room 'filled with biscuit for the troops during the winter' in the east. Other rooms were occupied by Burgoyne, Colonel Vico (French liaison officer), Steele, Poulett Somerset, Curzon and Dr Prendergast. '

'A hen-house abutted the wall of Vico's room and, bizarrely, a cow lived in the cellar under Prendergast's. The church and flagstaff were located on ground immediately south of the house within sight of Raglan's room. Beyond the two north entrances a broad avenue contained half-ruined outhouses which were used either as stables or, in the case of the more habitable, as offices and quarters. Other small outbuildings were occupied by Estcourt and other staff officers, the commissariat, printing press, post office, hospital and guard detachments. Four vineyards surrounded the house and three wells were easily accessible, and there was ample space for additional tents. Raglan had good reason to be pleased at the concentration of men, equipment and horses so close together.'

References to Articles:

- 1) ILN, Vol 54, pp 490, 511-513, 543-545, 574-575, 598, 622, 648-649.
- 2) ILN, Vol 55, pp 48, 88, 189.

References to Engravings:

- 3) ILN, Vol 54, pp 513, 516, 540-541, 544, 565, 568, 592-593, 609, 641.
- 4) ILN, Vol 55, pp 12, 48, 88-89, 189, 192.

Lord Raglan's Room as sketched by
Hugh Henry Clifford, V.C.,
member of the Rifle Brigade in the
Crimea.





